

Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of June 10, 2008

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Voting Members Present

Bob Cope (Chair)	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Steven Robins, Esq.	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing Wisconsin Place
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council
Jeffrey Slavin	Town of Somerset
R. Mallory Starr	Somerset House Management Association

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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Absent

Jessica Adams (Vice Chair)	The JBG Companies
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Gregory Knoop	Oudens + Knoop Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

Guests

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer
Leslie Hamm	B-CC Services Center
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
William McCloskey	Brookdale Resident
Lt. Michael Price	MC Police District 2
Ben Schnider	Staff, Delegate Bill Bronrott

Items 1, 2, & 3 – Introductions, Review/Approval of Minutes, Chair's Comments:

Members and guests introduced themselves. The minutes from the May meeting were approved with the following correction:

Leslie Olson stated that her comment regarding the problems caused by taxis on Wisconsin Circle was qualified by the phrase "extra taxis." The issue is that any taxis parked on the Circle will be a problem. The word "extra" will be deleted. The final statement will be: "**Ms. Olson** believes also that taxis would be of particular concern during rush hour."

Sande Brecher presented the County Executive's Certificate of Recognition to the following members for their service on the committee:

- **Robert Cope**
- **Steven Robins**
- **Jeffrey Slavin**
- **Garry Tyran** [Mr. Tyran not present, certificate to be mailed]

Ms. Brecher stated that the County appreciates the time and energy that members put into the committee. Advisory Committee members are the County's "eyes and ears" in the community, and their insights and advice are valued.

Mr. Cope noted that he and **Mr. Robins** are two of the original members that helped decide the make up of the committee a year before it was formally constituted. The Friendship Heights Advisory Committee is the only one of the County's TMDs that has seats for specific jurisdictions: Chevy Chase Village, Town of Somerset and Village of Friendship Heights. It was constituted in this manner to ensure the participation of local governments.

Ms. Brecher added that the other TMDs also include representatives from specific geographic areas, but they are unincorporated areas, so the Friendship Heights TMD is unique in that respect.

Steve Robins stated that he has been involved with the committee since 1999, and that he has enjoyed working with the group. The committee has done and will continue to do good things for Friendship Heights. Mr. Robins added that **April Birnbaum**, in attendance at today's meeting, has been nominated to replace him on the committee. **Mr. Robins** will continue to attend future meetings, as time permits.

Item 4 – Metro Ridership: **Mr. Cope** called attention to items 4a, 4b and 4c in the meeting packets detailing Metro boardings and alightings for the Friendship Heights station. **Mr. Cope** updates his tracking of ridership numbers when they come out in May.

The most recent average weekday boarding / alighting numbers indicate that Friendship Heights has for the first time gone above the 10,000 mark, despite the disruption caused by ongoing construction and sidewalk closures. The entry numbers have increased ('entry' numbers, or 'down escalator' numbers indicate local residents); and the exit numbers (commuters arriving for work) have also increased, but by a smaller amount. By next May, with the opening of Wisconsin Place, the exit numbers should see a substantial increase. The apartment complex will be coming on line by the end of this year, which will affect the entry numbers; and the office building will be open by the middle of 2009, which will cause a jump in the exit numbers.

Mr. Cope added that for a number of years the Friendship Heights station has been in the top three stations in terms of its ridership, behind Silver Spring and Shady Grove; Bethesda was fourth in ridership until 2003, when it took a slight lead over Friendship Heights. This was due to a number of new high rises being built in Bethesda.

Mr. Cope noted that item 4c shows the average weekday boardings for Friendship Heights, Bethesda, Med Center, Grosvenor, White Flint, Twinbrook, Rockville and Shady Grove going from 1985 to 2008. Mr. Cope added that he should have included Silver Spring in the list. Comparing the numbers in 1985 with the 2008 totals shows a lot of growth system-wide. For example, Shady Grove increased its boardings from a little over 4,000 to more than 14,000. If Friendship Heights, Bethesda and Shady Grove are subtracted from the total, the remaining

stations show smaller growth and have numbers that are substantially smaller than these three stations.

There will be new development coming on line that will also affect boardings at these other stations: LCOR/White Flint Town Center, Twinbrook and other areas of the Rockville corridor.

Item 5 – Wisconsin/Willard Intersection: **Jim Carlson** stated that State Highway Administration (SHA) staff are scheduled for a site visit to Friendship Heights tomorrow (June 11) to evaluate the Wisconsin Avenue/Willard Avenue intersection with regard to pedestrian safety. The SHA engineers will be joined by representatives from the TMD Advisory Committee (**Mr. Cope** and **Mr. Carlson**), members of the Friendship Heights Village Civic Association (**Barbara Tauben** and possibly others) and someone from County Highway Operations.

The group will meet at the future Commuter Store (17 Wisconsin Circle) at 7:30 AM.

Ms. Brecher noted that the Commuter Store opening is pending further completion of interior finishing work.

Mr. Cope commented, regarding Wisconsin Place, that if one were to walk down Friendship Blvd., between Western Avenue and Willard, and look next to Bloomingdale's at the steel now going up, construction of the new recreation center can be seen. From another vantage point near GEICO, the gym can be seen. The keys will be given to the County around October of this year. The County will then outfit it with the necessary equipment and other furnishings, and it should be open by spring of 2009.

Mr. Cope added that there will be a variety of activities available to the community at the rec center both morning and evening. Although the current budget outlook is tight, the County approved outfitting the center, at a cost of around \$500,000, and also approved the operating budget.

Ms. Brecher asked **Lt. Michael Price** if it would be possible to have law enforcement represented at the meeting with SHA, since enforcement is such an important pedestrian safety issue.

Lt. Price answered that he might be able to send a traffic officer, but could not make a firm commitment.

Mr. Cope asked about the status of the Wisconsin Circle taxi stand. **Mr. Carlson** answered that the County will maintain its position that some taxis are to be placed back on Wisconsin Circle. There are sign issues to be worked out, along with the coordination of the Willard stand closure.

Ms. Brecher noted that the taxi signs are now on the Circle. Transit Services requested that the signs be installed, and the sign shop was to have notified Transit Services one week before installation. That would have allowed sufficient time to notify the appropriate people, including Chevy Chase Land Company, taxi owners and drivers and coordinate the transition. However, the signs went in and the notification was not sent. There will be a meeting with taxi owners, drivers and others to coordinate from this point forward.

Ms. Brecher, Mr. Carlson, Ms. Olson and other CCLC representatives met with **Howard Benn**, Chief of Customer Operations and Service, and **Nancy Kutz**, Taxi Regulation Supervisor, in regards to the Wisconsin Circle issue. It was only then that it became known the signs had been placed on the Circle.

The current signs allow for three cabs on Wisconsin Circle. There is further work to be done using the staging area in back of Giant. A system will have to be put into place that allows drivers in back to see what is happening on the Circle; then, as one cab pulls out, another can take its place in the queue. The signs indicate that cabs may use the Circle immediately. Although not all drivers are aware of it yet, the word will get around. Taxi Regulation staff, including inspectors, will advise drivers and begin to enforce the parking rules on the Circle. In addition, there is a newsletter that goes to all taxi companies.

Julian Mansfield asked if there was a date certain for closure of the Willard stand. **Ms. Brecher** said this could still take several weeks. There are some legal requirements attached to closing the stand, possibly involving a traffic order.

Mr. Cope asked what signs will be put into place once the two taxicab signs are taken down.

Mr. Mansfield stated that the area had previously been signed “No Parking.”

Item 6 – Other Business: Mr. Carlson advised that the Annual Commuter Survey has been sent to selected area businesses. Item 6b in the meeting packet is a list of companies included in the survey – 22 companies, with about 3,700 employees. GEICO comprises close to half of the total, so it is always included. Most of the survey is now done on line.

Mr. Cope asked if those companies included on the list could also provide possible membership for the TMD Advisory Committee. **Ms. Brecher** answered that they could.

Mr. Carlson noted that GEICO, for example, is required to be part of the committee under its traffic mitigation agreement.

Ms. Brecher noted that in connection with representation on the committee, members are required to attend and that missing a certain number of meetings – possibly three – could be grounds for selecting a replacement. The Friendship Heights TMD does not have bylaws or a specific requirement; however, the County’s Boards, Committees and Commissions regulations have certain requirements in this regard. The Friendship Heights TMD has not to date been strict about meeting this requirement, since there is usually a quorum for issues needing a vote.

Ms. Brecher added that there was a decision at the outset to not have bylaws for the committee. This is something that the committee can reconsider at any time.

Jeffrey Slavin confirmed that the attendance requirement for most County committees is a limit of three absences.

Mr. Carlson continued with the updates. County Council voted May 22 to restore the funding to Super Fare Share which had been recommended for discontinuation under the Executive’s proposed budget. Super Fare Share will continue to be funded at its current level through FY09.

Mr. Carlson advised all employers in the Friendship Heights database of the restored funding (included in packet). Council also restored standard Fare Share, the 3-year program available county-wide, and Wheaton Super Fare Share funding.

Ms. Brecher stated that the new designation for DPWT, starting July 1, will be Department of Transportation (DOT). Some divisions currently in the department will be part of the new Department of General Services.

Ms. Brecher added that the current budget allows for operation of the Commuter Store in FY09. There will be some paid staff at the store, but volunteers are going to be needed also. **Ms. Brecher** met with the director of the County volunteer center, and **Mr. Mansfield** will include an announcement in the Friendship Heights Village News.

Ms. Brecher is working with the County's Public Information Office on a Grand Opening event for the Commuter Store, and coordinating with the County Executive's Office as well. It would be worth brainstorming in a future meeting the initiatives that the committee would like to see the County undertake as FY09 begins; and also ways in which the Commuter Store conducts its outreach activities.

Mr. Carlson presented a Traffic Mitigation Plan for Bloomingdale's. The committee voted to recommend approval of the TMP.

Mr. Slavin stated that **Mr. Petruccelli's** appearance at the last TMD meeting was appreciated, but that it might also be good to hear in a future meeting from one of the WMATA board members, whose purview is the entire Metro system, vs. only the bus operations. This would help the committee to better understand the relationship between the Friendship Heights community and Metro. **Ms. Brecher** agreed and also suggested that **Gary Erenrich**, the County's liaison to WMATA, can also attend and provide a good overview of Metro operations and the County's interactions with WMATA.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 AM

Next meeting date: July 8, 2008